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Editorial work outside the epistemic  
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### **Mouth Editors**

With every paper, every contribution we receive as journal editors, we find ourselves in a well-known dilemma: Is this the latest “state of the art”, is it sufficiently critical and reflected, is the submitted paper based on empirical and innovative research or have recent publications by well-known scholars been cited, does it fit the standards of academic writing, is the paper stylistically clean and does the language of the text “sound” good? – to mention but a few of these common concerns. And each time we must rethink our approaches and unlearn academic

behavior (rather than practice, perhaps) in order to be able to appreciate the generosity and hospitality offered to us by the contributors.

It is a complicated, often contradictory and difficult process, but we do enjoy facing the challenge of leaving the “epistemic dungeon” by acknowledging specifically the individualism and artful voices of many contributors of The Mouth. What we appreciate each time we get to work on a new issue of our journal, is not a perfect academic style or finding the latest publication appropriately cited somewhere, but the

original thinking and creativity offered to us, together with the possibility of connecting with diverse epistemic contexts, and learning something new and unknown as soon as we dive into the submitted texts. We therefore ascribe to the idea of publishing diverse academic contributions and papers that convince us with their creative writing, artful texts and experimental content.

After two inspiring (yet digital) departmental lecture series with a focus on linguistic anthropology at the universities of Mainz and Cologne in the summer term of 2021 and winter term of 2021/2022, respectively, we had planned to compile an issue on a fairly popular topic, namely “language and culture”, a field at the heart of our journal’s agenda and close to most of our own research foci as researchers. However, the timing of asking speakers of both colloquia to submit revised versions of their presentations could not have been more difficult: In the midst of the Covid19 pandemic, most colleagues were facing major challenges in their professional and personal lives, and *The Mouth* was understandably not among their most pressing concerns. Instead of receiving inspirational and artfully written texts, we mostly collected friendly rejections or announcements of delays. While the real world out there had long since been hit by the pandemic and its catastrophic effects, academia’s mantras of “publish-or-perish” and “can-you-help-us-out-with-a-peer-review” were actually still present. So we had to face the initial disappointment of being told by potential contributors that they were no longer able to perform, write, review, or keep deadlines. Perhaps this presented another occasion for us to climb the stairs out of the epistemic dungeon and breathe in some “real” air. We then put the issue aside for the time being.

Some months later, still during the pandemic, we invited colleagues from around the world to send us whatever they found relevant and enlightening as thematic contributions. We were, and we are still amazed by diverse and thought-provoking papers we received, on a range of topics that are linked to linguistic and cultural practice – yet still outside of mainstream categories of linguistic anthropology or anthropological linguistics.

Dayò Àkànmú and Francis Yedé invite us in their amazing paper on corruption to engage with a perspective that allows to play with it. Since corruption is ubiquitous, has been there since time immemorial, as they write, we have to deal with it. And one way to restore agency again and again is creativity in language and laughing at what is at stake. Yet the authors also make clear that courage is needed in order to write about corruption. They remind us that there is always some sovereignty that people can keep. Yorùbá, a world language, they write, is one of the tools to achieve this.

Selbut Longtau writes from a different position. His language, Tarok, is hardly ever seen as a world language, unlike Yorùbá. Tarok is spoken by a much smaller community in northeastern Nigeria, at the foothills of the Jos Plateau. Selbut Longtau has contributed to knowledge about the language, history and anthropology of the Tarok over decades. In this volume, he presents his recollections and observations about the rituals of young women in the society prior to entering the stage of adulthood. The author acts as a broker who offers a translation of Tarok knowledge into academic approaches and language. The complexity of the ritual practices and their metaphorical meanings shed light on what is known in his culture about other forms of positionality

(pertaining to gender, age, etc.), and help to understand readers that this does not necessarily mean to position oneself in a stagnant, permanent way. Young women in the Tarok society assume diverse roles and speak from changing positions as they grow up. In Tarok, marriage (which is the final stage in growing up) is preferably based on clan exogamy. Married women have their own way of speaking, in a “broken” form of Tarok, performing unfamiliarity. Upon marriage, girls become women, and women turn into foreigners.

A special contribution is the first published academic text by Konca Manav, “Türkischer Kaffee. Ein geschichtsträchtiges Getränk”, in which she takes a look at the history of the coffee bean and also of coffee roasting and enjoyment, guided by her memories of the unique smell of Turkish coffee. She shows how, in today’s fast-paced world, Turkish coffee has remained a stable part of Turkish eating and drinking culture. Konca Manav addresses the topic from her position as a German-Turkish woman who, as a heritage, has determined the sensibility for tastes and scents over generations.

Sambulo Ndlovu writes about the role of gender in kinship terminology and analyzes various grammatical means of expressing gender with kin terms in their cultural context. The author employs the concept of “doing gender” to show how affixation derives gendered kinship terms in this patrilineal society, for example the term *malume* ‘male mother’. In a patriarchal society, the term *malume*, used for maternal uncles, seems to deviate from the other kinship terms in its morphological setup, but this, as the author explains, is in line with the underlying cultural conceptualizations of the social roles of these relatives as ‘male mothers’, who are seen as mothers rather than fathers.

The contribution by Anne Storch deals with invented languages and concepts of linguistic practices. She draws on two books by Umberto Eco and Clemens J. Setz respectively to discuss the perceptions and conceptualizations of invented languages and their purposes. Her analysis of constructed languages also includes the influence of colonialism and imperialism and the phantasies that have been projected onto linguistic creativities in these contexts. In the final part, the author shares personal experiences of her visit into the world of invented languages on [conlang.fandom.com](http://conlang.fandom.com) (a website where people can create their own languages) by reflecting on the notion of mimesis.

In his paper, Obert Mlambo examines the verbal practices of veterans of the war of independence (often referred to as *Chimurenga*) in Zimbabwe, focusing on their rhetorical strategies of self-formation in discourse. One of the main features in the speech of Zimbabwean veterans is the focus on constructed masculinity or, in contrast, a rhetoric of effeminacy attributed to political enemies. Thus, speaking about the liberation war of the ZANU-PF political party since the 1980s involves different discursive strategies of conveying ideologies of masculinity and notions of strength and heroism in these contexts, which Mlambo analyzes in his rhetorical and linguistic anthropological contribution against the background of a patriarchal society.

Ellen Hurst-Harosh focuses on cultural artefacts and material objects in relation to the language practices of African youth in South Africa (sometimes referred to as *tsotsitaal*). By looking at the connection between person and object, or person and musical practice, the author explores the ways in which brands (as global styles), music, and cell phones play a cen-

tral role in young people's language and interactions, and how speakers use body language, touch, look at, or react to these objects, and reflect on them in their conversations. Drawing on a rich corpus of empirical data, she focuses on the ways in which global influences and local practices coincide in these studied contexts of young peer groups.

In his stimulating contribution on *ohùn*, a concept from Yorùbá youth culture in Nigeria, Augustine Agwuele analyzes how young people in particular use language to resist a very hierarchically organized society that revolves around notions of seniority. The focus here is on an introduction to Yorùbá seniority and its acquisition, its obligations – and then on the speakers' means of challenging and deconstructing notions of patriarchy and these social dynamics around "juniors" and "seniors" through the *ohùn* attitude.

Luca Ciucci's study examines the Paraguayan language Chamacoco in terms of linguistic secrecy and concealment. He focuses on the Ebitoso dialect, which is spoken by the vast majority of the Chamacoco population. Secrecy and concealment of Chamacoco are very present practices in Ebitoso and manifest themselves in different ways. Ciucci describes four of these ways of concealing the language, offering a deep insight into the background of concealment and unveiling, leading from religious practices to indigenous identity to secret language.

Roger Blench contributes two short pieces to this volume which shed light on the ways in which language practices and especially oral tales and stories help to understand the early history of mankind. In "Away with the fairies: how old is oral human culture?" the author explores the question of using oral history to re-

construct early human connections. Showing similar tales in various parts of Eurasia and Africa, Blench argues for an early existence of complex oral culture. Moreover, he argues for a common origin of the similar tales and folklore which means that oral histories could help to reconstruct aspects of early human history such as migration and contact. In his other piece, "From Tibet to Nigeria via Hollywood: travels of Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale'" Blench traces the movements of a tale of the three rioters who seek to kill death and all die in the end. While a famous part of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the author situates the origin of the story in the Himalayas and finds similar stories in various parts of Africa, Asia and Europe.

We hope you enjoy reading *The Mouth* 10.

The editors

